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THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARDS WAR

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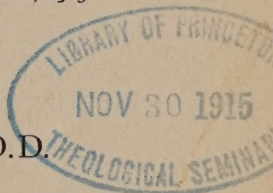
ST. NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL, ON 7 JUNE, 1915

BY THE RIGHT REV.

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The attitude of the church
towards war

*The Attitude of the Church towards War*¹

is a subject which makes its appeal to all of us to-day. I own I have been audacious in selecting it. But it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to concentrate our attention upon doctrinal or theological problems, when they have no bearing upon the world's trouble in which our country is involved. And, if I have erred in dealing with a topic which is already too familiar to you, or which you have had occasion to investigate more fully and carefully on your own account, I must throw myself upon your kind indulgence, while I endeavour, in the course of a single lecture, to handle a theme of which the magnitude is, I admit, far in excess of my limited powers.

¹ The lecturer is indebted for several patristic references to Dr. Bethune Baker's "The Influence of Christianity on War" (Burney Prize Essay, 1888), and to the article "War" in the "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities".

You have probably observed that, for one reason or another, the subject of war has been largely overlooked in the textbooks of Christian Ethics. Is it that writers have assumed that war between Christian nations was in the future so unlikely a contingency, that it no longer needed attention and analysis? Or, is it that popular ethical treatises have exclusively devoted themselves to the problems of individual and civic life, and have left untouched and unconsidered the moral problems, which are concerned with the growth and development of nations and with the interaction of great communities? Whatever the reason for the neglect of this subject may have been in past years, it is not likely to be the case that any treatise on Christian Ethics for the remainder of this century will fail to deal with it.

Now, when I ask what the attitude of the Church has been towards war in the past, I suppose I am raising two questions: (i) what has been the attitude of the Church towards the policy of using armed force? and (ii) in what measure have Christians been permitted

by the Church to participate in regular warfare? The two questions are not quite the same; they present different aspects of the same moral problem.

Let me quite briefly illustrate my meaning. All are agreed in accepting our Lord's great principle that there are some things which have to be rendered unto Cæsar, and some things unto God. When war breaks out, the State calls for troops. Is there any reason why the Church should say its members must not serve? War means the violent taking of life. (a) It was possible for the Church to hold that, as the violent taking of life is murder, those who participate in it are, therefore, blood-guilty; that war violates the first moral law of God and the fundamental principles of humanity; and that thus a follower of Christ, who would obey the call of his earthly sovereign, puts his duty towards his country before his duty towards God. Has that been the attitude of the Church? Has the outbreak of a national war meant for the consistent Christian that he must make his choice between the service of man and the service of God?

(b) Again, the Church is confronted with another difficulty in dealing with the subject of war. Did not its Divine master Himself lay down peremptory precepts? "Resist not evil"; "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"; "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you"; "They who take the sword shall perish by the sword". "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (Matt. v. 39, 44; John xviii. 36). Is not the teaching of the Apostles to the same effect epitomised in such words as "Overcome evil with good"; "Live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 19, 21; cf. xiv. 19; Heb. xii. 14)?

On the other hand, is it not equally true that Holy Scripture contains passages from which a very different conclusion might be drawn? Were not some of the most famous of the Old Testament Saints men occupied in war? Did not the Chosen People win, at the sword's point, the possession of the Land of Promise under the leadership of the servants of Jehovah? The God of Israel Himself is described as "a

Man of War" and as "the Lord of hosts". The Old Testament is full of such phrases as "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Ps. xxiv. 8); "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Ps. cxliv. 1).

Turning to the New Testament, our Lord Himself is recorded as having driven out by force the traders who had encroached upon the sacred precincts of the Temple (John ii. 15). He bestowed the highest eulogy upon a centurion in the Roman Army (Matt. viii. 10). In His farewell words to His disciples He counsels them that the time is come when, if they had no swords, they should sell their very garments and buy them! (Luke xxii. 36).

The first convert from the Gentiles is Cornelius, a centurion of Cæsarea (Acts x.). St. Paul speaks of the magistrate as a minister of God who beareth not the sword in vain (Rom. xiii. 4).

Whatever line the Church of Christ took, an appeal to the language of Holy Scripture could evidently be made on the other side. It was always conceivable that the Church

might uphold a refusal to serve in the Army. We should expect, in any case, to find that there would always be some devout Christians who would base their refusal to take part in military operations on the literal meaning of our Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount.

But, as we shall see, the Church of Christ has never, as a matter of fact, denounced all wars as wicked. It has never absolutely forbidden its servants to fight. Individuals, indeed, have contended that all war was wicked. The Church has always held that some wars were just. Individuals have contended that all war was murder. The Church has always held that the act of taking life in ordinary warfare was judicial in character, and not to be confounded with murder. Individuals have contended that our Lord's words make it impossible for a consistent Christian to bear arms. The Church has always held that a soldier acts as a servant of the State; that responsibility for his actions rests upon the community as a whole; and that, while all war is evil, it is better to make war than to acquiesce in moral turpitude, in the betrayal of

the rights of other nations, in the surrender of sacred liberties, and in the massacre of weak and defenceless inhabitants.

It will be convenient to look at the attitude of the Church towards war during each of the three periods : (i) From the Apostolic Age to the Conversion of Constantine ; (ii) From Constantine to the close of the fifteenth century ; (iii) From the sixteenth century to the present day.

(i) The consideration of the first period need not detain us long. The power of the Roman Emperors is supreme throughout the civilised world. The Church of Christ, with its small compact body, is continually growing and expanding, in spite of opposition. It is independent of geographical or racial boundaries. It is viewed with dislike, with suspicion, and, at the best, with tolerance, by the State. Its members are often put to death, persecuted, and pillaged, sometimes by the officials, and more often by the mob. But Christians are found in the Army in increasing numbers. The legend of the Thundering Legion is a well-known illustration of this fact from the

second century. The evidence of sepulchral inscriptions confirms it. How common it was for Christians to serve as soldiers in the ranks, has been carefully shown in Prof. Harnack's "Expansion of Christendom" (Vol. II, pp. 204-217, Eng. transl.).

Unquestionably many of the most prominent and influential leaders of the Church strongly protested against the practice. Service in the Army seemed to them in three different ways to compromise the whole Christian position. (*a*) To take the oath of allegiance to the Emperor was to do dishonour to the *Sacramentum* of baptism, the rite of allegiance to Christ; (*b*) A soldier's life under the colours brought him into daily contact with the emblems of idolatry and with the rites of pagan worship; (*c*) The work of a soldier polluted him with blood-guiltiness by compelling him to take life.

Tertullian, the fiery African theologian, denounced the very idea of a Christian serving in the Army (cf. "De Corona Militis," c. 11; "De Idol." c. 19 and c. 73). It is true that in another treatise, when he is boasting of the

growing multitudes of the Church, he speaks with pride of Christians who are everywhere to be found by the Pagans both on shipboard and in camp ("Apolog." c. 42). But his stricter view was the one most characteristic of his teaching. It seems to have been shared by the Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and Origen, and later on by the Italian Father, Lactantius ("De Div. Just." I. 18).

Commanders were probably only too glad to get Christian recruits, men of good character, steady, and courageous; they would not be over-particular in asking awkward questions about a common soldier's religion and worship. But difficulties might at any moment arise; and were more likely to arise in the case of officers than in the case of privates. Military life was honeycombed with little idolatrous usages. A conscientious Christian officer must often have felt himself in a wrong position when confronted with idolatrous emblems. A refusal to recognise them or a protest against them would lead to a general inquiry, which might very possibly set aflame a ferocious persecution against the brethren in the locality as well as in the camp.

There were good practical reasons for discouraging military service among Christians. And the bare idea of a Christian priest or bishop enlisting or taking part in warfare was probably never dreamed of.

We have to remember that, during this first period, civilisation was co-extensive with the Empire ; that the independent life of nationalities had disappeared ; and that the function of the Army was either to police the provinces, or to keep at bay the barbarian hordes on the frontiers, or to defend the wearer of the Imperial purple from the dangers of treasonable attack and the assaults of open insurrection.

(ii) In the second period, the question of the Church's attitude towards war becomes at once one of the gravest importance. In adopting Christianity, the Empire had presumably hoped to secure for its Army one of the most valuable sources of recruiting. So far as the Church was concerned, to serve under a Christian Emperor was a different thing from serving under a Pagan. Idolatry had disappeared, at least nominally ; and with it had gone all the polluting paraphernalia of Pagan-

ism. Two chief objections to military service were thus removed. The moral difficulty alone remained: Was war murder? did a soldier incur blood-guiltiness, excluding him from the Holy Eucharist? And even this difficulty was, in a great measure, met by the character of the continuous fighting in which the Empire was involved. Men fought to defend their homes, their families, their lives, against the invasion of the ferocious and pitiless swarms of Vandals and Huns, Goths and Visigoths, who carried all before them. There could be little to find fault with in men who risked their lives to defend their homes and their Church. The warlike defence of the weak and innocent might, and sometimes did, avert from the sanctuary savage orgies of lust and cruelty.

For the most part, therefore, the moral problem is not one that perturbs the minds of the great Fathers of the fourth century. St. Basil (Ep. 188), indeed, particularly mentions that the former generation, which had known what fighting was for the cause of chastity and honour, had never regarded killing in battle as

murder ; though, for his own part, he was disposed to say, that a soldier, on returning from the wars, should be excluded for three years from the Holy Communion. But in this he finds no support from others. St. Athanasius goes so far as to hold that to kill enemies in battle is sanctioned by law and is deserving of praise. St. Ambrose says, "There is nothing wrong in bearing arms, but to do so with the mere object of plunder is sin". Again, he lays it down that, "The courage which protects one's country in war against the raids of barbarians, which defends the weak and helpless ones of our homes, and shields our friends against the foe, is completely righteous" (see "De Offic." I. 27, 35, 61). St. Augustine is characteristically sensible and practical. He reassures an officer who has sought his advice : "Provided they are really good men, those who are fighting are unquestionably engaged in the pursuit of peace, even though the quest be prosecuted through bloodshed" (Ep. 229). He devotes to the subject the whole of a letter, hastily, but vehemently, written, to an officer named Bonifacius, who is troubled with conscientious scruples : "Don't fancy that no

one serving under arms can be pleasing to God. Among such men was the holy David, and very many others of the saints of that age. Among them also was the centurion . . . of whom the Lord said : ' Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel '. Among these was the famous Cornelius ; and men, too, who came to John to be baptised. John enjoined them to be content with their pay ; he never forbade them to serve. When you arm yourself for the battle, keep this uppermost in your mind, that your physical courage is God's gift ; resolve to do nothing with this gift of God contrary to God. Peace be your chief desire—war your necessity. For we don't seek peace in the interests of war, but we fight in order that peace may be won. In warring, therefore, be a man of peace, so that those whom you conquer you may draw through victory into the practical benefits of peace " (Ep. CLXXXIX.).

St. Augustine draws a sharp line between wars that are just and wars that are unjust ("Quæst. in Hept." VI. 10). A war, he says, may be just that is declared against a nation for refusal to grant compensation for outrage or injury ; a war may be just, also, which is waged

for the sake of repressing the arrogance of over-weening insolence ("Contr. Faust." xxii. 75). The really bad things in war are the lust of destruction, the cruelty of revenge, the mercilessness of implacability, the savagery of rebellion, the passion for domination, and the like.

We look in vain for any adequate dealing with the profound problems raised by our Lord's words. Here the Patristic commentaries give us very little help. Our search meets with most disappointing results.

The general position taken up by the Christian Fathers in reference to war might be thus summarised : If the world were Christian, there would be no wars. As things are, wars will always recur. Some wars are unprovoked, unjust, savage ; others are just, honourable and necessary, more especially wars of self-defence, and wars for the protection of the weak. A soldier's calling is perfectly compatible with the service of Christ.

Other questions, however, in connexion with war called for settlement by the Church. If wars could be just, and if Christians could take part in them, was there anything to pre-

vent those in Holy Orders from going to the front, and taking their part? If they were in the thick of fighting, what then? Was it not also the work of protecting the defenceless and the weak?

This was a question which for the next five or six centuries was evidently a subject of burning controversy. The Apostolic Canons (7, 74, 81, 83) had forbidden bishops, priests and deacons, to enter upon any secular occupation. They had further enjoined that, if any such were to join the Army, they should be subjected to degradation. The first Council of Toledo (400) laid it down that, if any occupant of one of the lower ecclesiastical Orders should bear arms, he was to forfeit all chance of elevation to the Order of deacon. In 581, the Council of Maçon found it necessary to impose the penalty of thirty days' imprisonment, with a diet of bread and water, upon any cleric who should be found bearing arms, or wearing military uniform. Many other examples might be cited from the provincial Councils of France (cf. Bingham's "*Antiq.*" xvii. v.).

Clerical militarism evidently reached the proportions of a grave scandal. It is sternly rebuked in the words of the Capitular of Charlemagne (801): "No priest shall take part in battle ; only two or three bishops and a few priests shall attend an army for the discharge of the necessary spiritual functions ; what hope can there be of victory, when at one hour the priests offer the Body of the Lord to Christians, and at the next with wicked hands slaughter the Pagans to whom they should have been preaching the Gospel?"

We must, however, bear in mind two or three things. (i) With the overthrow of the Empire, and the shock that had been given to civilisation, the popularity of military service had immensely increased. War was the one avenue of distinction. (ii) After the adoption of Christianity by the barbarian tribes, princes and chieftains were continually seeking to make their peace with God by gifts and bequests to the Church of lands and property. These carried with them the performance of feudal obligations, notably those of supplying men and arms to the civil lord of the country. (iii) Far too many young and worldly-minded

men were appointed, some to be prince-bishops, and others to be heads of wealthy monastic houses. The consequence was inevitable. We constantly find instances of bishops, abbots, and priors taking part themselves in the military tumults of the Middle Ages. Examples will readily occur to the reader of Gibbon, or of Milman's "Latin Christianity". Let me give three illustrations. (a) Numbers of great ecclesiastics are reported to have fallen at the Battle of Agincourt. (b) At Westminster Abbey we have the actual bill,¹ dated A.D. 1386, for the construction of a suit of mail, which the Abbot Litlington was to wear in the event of an invasion by the French. (c) When the Pope sent to Richard I. imploring him not to detain in prison "his dear son," the warlike Bishop of Beauvais, the King sent the Pope back the armour wherein the Bishop was taken, with the words of Jacob's sons to their father: "See whether this be thy son's coat or no".

The attitude of the Church towards war in the Middle Ages encouraged a dangerous

¹ For £6 (= £90 in our money).

laxity of view. The Crusades for the overthrow of Islam and the recovery of the Sacred sites gave the sanction of the Church to wild enterprises of aggressive warfare. The formation of the Order of the Knights Templar was, indeed, an endeavour to regulate the military spirit with monastic rules of chastity, poverty, and temperance. St. Bernard (1128), when he composed his "*Liber ad Milites Templi*," sought to inspire the Knights with high and holy motives. But his maxim, "In fighting for Christ, the kingdom of Christ is acquired," was open to fearful distortions. The ideas of chivalry may have had their root in this first consecration of military enthusiasm. But the evils of the system which the Church had inaugurated far more than outweighed any good that had been done for the service of Christ.

We must, however, take our leave of this part of our subject. We will do so by giving an example of the way in which the Church honestly endeavoured, by means of a simple ceremony, to hallow the vocation of a soldier. The following is a "*Benedictio novi Militis*,"¹

¹ Quoted by Monsignor Battifol, "*Constructive Quarterly*," April, 1915.

assigned to the thirteenth century. The Bishop says : " Take this sword in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and mayest thou use it for thine own defence, and for that of the Holy Church of God, as well as for the confusion of the enemies of the Cross of Christ and of the Christian Faith ; and, so far as human frailty shall allow, mayest thou injure no one therewith unjustly." Then the Bishop, while administering to the soldier three blows with the flat of the sword, shall say, " Be thou a soldier fond of peace, active, loyal, and true to the service of God." (" *Esto miles pacificus, strenuus, fidelis, et Deo devotus.*")

(iii) In attempting to say a few words about the Church's attitude to war in the last or Modern Period, I can only deal with one or two of the many interesting aspects of the subject.

(a) The close of the fifteenth century found the Christian world shocked at the hideous cruelty of wars, too often arising from the temper, vanity, and ambition of individual monarchs. The Renaissance heralded a new social life. The revival of letters promoted gentleness and human sympathy. The Refor-

mation, which renewed the study of Scripture and the reading of the great Fathers, favoured the promotion of higher ideals of life than those represented in victorious warfare and heroic fighting. Men like Sir Thomas More and Erasmus bitterly satirised the war-lust of their day. Erasmus, a native of the Netherlands, and a frequent sojourner at Louvain, had seen that country harried and desolated by freebooting Knights, by drilled armies, and by troops of half-naked Anabaptists. He is never tired of referring to the needless wickedness of war. Again and again he returns to the subject in the prefaces of his books and in his letters. His fiercest diatribe is probably to be found in his "Adagia," under the text, "Dulce bellum inexpertis". He was a free critic, but a true servant, of the Church. He could never forget his visit to Italy, in the course of which the aged Pope Julius had put himself at the head of an army, in order to obtain by force some augmentation of the Papal possessions. The voice of Erasmus was one of the most potent witnesses against the lax views respecting war, into which the Church and the Hierarchy itself had been helplessly drifting.

(b) The beginning of the sixteenth century was disgraced by the wild excesses of the Anabaptist sect. Many of them repudiated, on religious grounds, any rights on the part of the civil authority, and they denied the lawfulness of a Christian to bear arms. These views were unjustly imputed, for controversial reasons, to the leaders of the Reformation Movement. Accordingly, in the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Reformers were careful to insert that, "Christians may lawfully engage in just war and serve as soldiers": and, in her 37th Article, the Church of England found it necessary to lay down that, "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrate, to wear weapons and serve in the wars".

This sentence merits our attention. They were troublous and disordered times. On the one hand, there were numbers of wild spirits who were only too ready to take up arms without any authoritative enrolment or lawful summons to serve. On the other hand, after the collapse of feudalism, many were influenced by the strength of the appeal to individual texts of Scripture, and were tempted to refuse their

services when called upon to take up arms for the defence of their sovereign and their country. The Church's appeal to simple patriotism has rarely been put more simply and directly than it was by Bishop Latimer in his Sixth Sermon on the Lord's Prayer (Vol. I, p. 416): "Likewise, thou subject, when thou art commanded by the King or his officers to go to war, to fight against the King's enemies, go with a good heart and courage, not doubting that God will preserve thee, and that thou canst not shorten thy life with well-doing. Peradventure God hath appointed thee to die there, or to be slain; happy art thou when thou diest in God's quarrel. For to fight against the King's enemies, being called unto it by the magistrates, it is God's service; therefore, when thou diest in that service with a good faith, happy art thou. There be some which say when their friends are slain in battle, 'Oh, if he had tarried at home, he would not have lost his life'. These sayings are naught: for God hath appointed every man his time. To go to war in presumptuousness, without an ordinary (i.e. regular) calling, such going to war I allow (i.e. approve)

not, but when thou art called, go in the name of the Lord, and be well assured in thy heart that thou canst not shorten thy life with well-doing."

The Church of England has never shrunk from recognising and honouring the calling of a soldier. It would be easy, I dare say, to multiply examples. I will content myself with reminding you of the words of old Thomas Fuller: "A soldier is one of a lawful, necessary, commendable, and honourable profession; yea, God Himself may seem to be one of the company of soldiers, in that He styleth Himself 'a man of war' (Exod. xv. 3; Is. xiii. 13). Now though many hate soldiers as the twigs of the old rod war, wherewith God scourgeth countries into repentance, yet is their calling so needful, that were not *some* soldiers we must *all* be soldiers, daily employed to defend our own, the world would grow so licentious" (Thos. Fuller: "Holy and Profane State," p. 113, Ed. 1841, London).

(c) George Fox and that devout body of followers whom we know as Quakers, testified to the sincerity of their adherence to the literal meaning of our Lord's words in the Sermon on

the Mount by maintaining that it was wrong to bear arms. For many reasons the Society of Friends is entitled to our deepest respect. But they enjoy the liberty of their opinions and the safety of their homes under the State-protection of a police and an army. Their security is due to the fact that a State must protect its citizens from violence: and this is the logical negation of their principles and their scruples.

A nation is more than an individual. The refusal to protect the weak or to succour the oppressed is no more Christianity than it is common-sense.

To regard the Sermon on the Mount as a literal code of rules is to mistake its whole character and purpose. But no one will deny that the Church has still much to learn in respect of its social duties from the study of our Lord's words. His Divine precepts may have been stated in the terms of paradox. Literalism in their interpretation may beget confusion and disorder. But the great pictures which are therein drawn for the world's contemplation and instruction point in the direction of an ideal standard of morality which must

be for the Church a never-ceasing object of persevering labour and practical aspiration.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor in his "Ductor Dubitantium" (Book II, chapter II, Rule VII) discusses the great principle—"Nothing is to be condemned which Christ permits, and nothing is to be permitted which He condemns". In the course of his discussion he remarks: "For since it is disputable whether Christianity allows of war, and it is not disputable, but very certain, that it speaks nothing of it expressly, neither gives any cautions concerning it in particular, it will seem to be a *casus omissus* in the law" ("Works," Vol. IX, pp. 474, 480 ff.). But time presses; and I must invite my hearers to refer, on their own account, to the more detailed consideration which this wise old Anglican divine bestows upon the subject in his own inimitable, but, as we should say, somewhat over-elaborate and diffuse, style of eloquence.

(d) There are reasons for which I shall quite definitely abstain from particular allusion to the present European strife. I will content myself with calling your attention to the fact that once more in the history of the Church,

the question whether a priest may bear arms and serve in the army as a soldier, has been forced into prominence. On the other hand, what would St. Basil have said to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the trenches? We can thank God for a change of attitude which would probably to him have been unintelligible. He could not distinguish between war and murder, or discriminate between the responsibility of the State and the duty of the soldier.

At first sight, indeed, it might seem as if the Church's attitude towards war had made little progress since the days of St. Augustine. But that is very far from being the case. War is no longer the sport of princes, nor fighting the chief occupation of the upper classes. Owing principally to the leavening influence of Christian teaching, the submission of national disputes to arbitration has during the last half-century been steadily increasing in favour. The growth of humanitarianism has compelled the leading countries to concert measures for the care of the sick and the wounded under a flag which civilised combatants will respect. The rules which should be observed in warfare

towards non-combatants and towards neutrals have been drawn up for the guidance of belligerents. The Hague Conference, whether practically efficacious or not, is a witness to the world's longing for peace. It stands for the promotion of "those rules of fairness, reason, justice, and humanity, which," as President Wilson recently stated in his Note to Berlin, "all modern opinion regards as imperative".

(e) But, quite apart from the trend of general international opinion, the Church of Christ itself, in its attitude towards war, has made a great advance. It refuses to acquiesce in the inevitableness of war. It is never going to assent to the view that war is necessary, or that the differences of nations cannot be composed except by resort to force. It does not, indeed, regard war as the greatest evil. The greatest evil of all is the sin which produces war; the temper, the revenge, the pride, the avarice, the ambition, and the vanity which beget it. But it *does* regard war as a monstrous and needless social evil, the abolition of which must be worked for patiently and prayerfully. Its abolition may take centuries; but what are centuries in the building up of the Kingdom of God?

A little progress has already been made. Only a little, it is true ; but the attitude of the Church is one not of despondency, but of undiminished courage and hopefulness.

Until nations agree to settle disputes by an appeal to justice and reason, armies, which are the police force of international civilisation, for the observance of treaty obligations, and for the protection of the weaker states, must be adequately and self-sacrificingly maintained. The disorders of invasion, the pillage and destruction of cities, the devastation of provinces, the overthrow of liberty and of popular rights, must be sternly checked by the righteous employment of armed force. *Si vis pacem, para bellum* must alas ! continue for many generations to be the maxim of Christian states.

The Church declines to regard war in the light, either of a physical disaster, like an earthquake or a typhoon ; or even of a pestilence, whose causes may be diagnosed and countered, and whose effects may be neutralised and mitigated, by science. It regards war as the outcome of evil passions.

The Spirit of Christ calls upon the Church to co-operate for the abolition of this appeal to

violence. It is the result of evils more widespread, more deep-rooted, more complex, more insidious than any with which it has hitherto attempted to grapple. Slavery has been suppressed in all civilised lands. Duelling, in our country, has disappeared. The moral evils of which they were the fruit are still inherent in man's nature. But their abolition has been possible; it has purified society; it has diminished the miseries of our fellow-creatures. The abolition of a far more universal and more organised exercise of brute force must be a far more difficult reform to bring about. But the Church will never acquiesce in its impossibility.

May we not say that the attitude of the Church towards war at the present day is this—that it regards war as one of those institutions of the human race, which Christ never in so many words denounced; but which, in the progress of the ages, is doomed to disappear through the resistless operation of the Spirit among the sons of men? For that blessed end let us, during our brief span of earthly service, not be ashamed to work and pray unceasingly; even while we unite as a Christian people to

contend to the last for the defence of justice, liberty, and honour. War is not the worst evil : nor is the preservation of life the greatest good. The Church's attitude towards the problem of war reflects, though all too feebly and imperfectly, the guidance of the Divine Spirit. The thought of the Church is not stationary. It is learning little by little to apprehend more fully what is the mind of Christ. Centuries may not complete the process. The end is not in sight yet. But it is not in doubt. The time will come when nations shall no longer decide their differences by the arbitrament of force. Reason and justice will displace the violence and brutality of war. Men will look back with horror and wonder upon the obsolete methods of savagery. Then will have disappeared for ever one of the chief social obstacles which now retard the coming of the Reign of Christ.

"Thy Kingdom come, O God !

Thy rule, O Christ, begin !

Break with thine iron rod

The tyrannies of sin."

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